

ED 369 732

SP 035 153

AUTHOR Pickett, Anna Lou; And Others  
 TITLE Using Paraeducators Effectively in the Classroom.  
 Fastback 358.  
 INSTITUTION Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Bloomington,  
 Ind.  
 REPORT NO ISBN-0-87367-358-1  
 PUB DATE 93  
 NOTE 34p.  
 AVAILABLE FROM Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN  
 47402-0789 (\$1 members, \$1.25 nonmembers).  
 PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; \*Classroom Techniques; Elementary  
 Secondary Education; Higher Education; \*Instructional  
 Effectiveness; \*Paraprofessional School Personnel;  
 \*School Administration; Self Evaluation  
 (Individuals); Staff Role; \*Supervision; Teacher  
 Evaluation; Teacher Role; Training Methods

## ABSTRACT

Paraprofessionals in education have become specialists, who are more accurately described as paraeducators. Paraeducators work alongside their professional colleagues and participate in the delivery of instruction and related services. This pamphlet provides information about strategies that can improve the deployment, supervision, and training of paraeducators. The pamphlet describes the role of district-level personnel, principals, and teachers in establishing paraeducator programs; clarifies the role of the paraeducator and the supervising teacher; provides a sample paraeducator job description; offers suggestions on daily supervision of the paraeducator; outlines important lesson plan components; provides a list of self-evaluation questions for the paraeducator; offers guidelines for training paraeducators through orientation, inservice training, and on-the-job training; and discusses evaluating paraeducator performance and evaluating teacher supervision of paraeducator performance. The pamphlet concludes with a list of five suggested readings. (JDD)

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# Using Paraeducators Effectively in the Classroom

Anna Lou Pickett, Stanley F. Vasa,  
Allen L. Steckelberg

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# **Using Paraeducators Effectively in the Classroom**

by  
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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 93-84643

ISBN 0-87367-358-1

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Bloomington, Indiana

This fastback is sponsored by the Golden Crescent Ohio Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, which made a generous contribution toward publication costs.

The chapter sponsors this fastback in honor of Paul Young for his continuing support of public education, in recognition of his full life of 98 years, and for living the ideals of character, service, and leadership for more than 72 years as a member of Phi Delta Kappa.

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## Introduction

Nationwide efforts are under way to improve the effectiveness of our schools. At the heart of these initiatives is the movement to empower teachers and to enhance the status of the teaching profession. These goals are being accomplished by redefining and expanding teachers' roles. Teachers are both instructors and "educational managers," with increased responsibility and accountability for determining education priorities based on student needs, developing and evaluating curriculum content, and conferring with colleagues and parents to determine how best to organize schools and to allocate resources.

As teachers spend more time on these expanded duties, less time is available for direct instruction. To take on these new, more intricate duties successfully, teachers require assistance and support from many sources. One of the most important, but under-recognized, human resources available to teachers is the paraprofessional work force.

The employment of paraprofessionals has grown steadily and their duties have expanded dramatically since teacher aides were introduced into classrooms almost 40 years ago. Indeed, paraprofessionals in education have become specialists, who are more accurately described as *paraeducators*, just as their counterparts in law and medicine are designated as paralegals and paramedics. Their duties are no longer primarily clerical in nature, nor are they limited to maintaining learn-

ing centers, preparing materials, or monitoring study halls, lunchrooms, and playgrounds. Paraprofessionals work alongside their professional colleagues and participate in the delivery of instruction and related services.

Despite increased reliance on paraeducators in complex and demanding roles, many school districts' personnel policies and administrative procedures do not adequately reflect these changes. Formal opportunities for training and career development seldom are available. This fastback provides information about strategies that policy makers, teachers, and staff developers can build on to improve the deployment, supervision, and training of paraeducators.



## **Establishing Paraeducator Programs**

**E**ffective integration of paraeducators into classrooms requires cooperation among administrators and practitioners at the district and building levels. Ideally, districtwide policies define the roles of paraeducators (usually in differentiated staffing arrangements), set standards for employment, and provide opportunities for career development and training. Thus, principals, teachers, and paraeducators must understand district policies in order to develop working environments that recognize and value the contributions of paraeducators.

District-level personnel with responsibility for tapping the resources of paraeducators are charged with:

- Developing job descriptions for paraeducators containing criteria for employment and duties.
- Identifying distinctions in the roles and duties of teachers and paraeducators.
- Providing systematic training for paraeducators, combining formal pre- and inservice sessions with supervised on-the-job coaching.
- Developing links with institutions of higher education to expand opportunities for career advancement so that skilled paraeducators may enter the professional ranks.
- Conducting training for teachers to strengthen supervisory and management skills.

- Enhancing principals' capacity to assist teachers and paraeducators to work as effective teams.

The responsibilities of principals connected with integrating paraeducators into the education team include:

- Ensuring that teachers and paraeducators understand the distinctions in their roles and are aware of district policies.
- Involving teachers directly in the selection of paraeducators.
- Scheduling opportunities for teachers and paraeducators to meet regularly for on-the-job coaching and planning.
- Developing, in concert with teachers, criteria and instruments for assessing the performance of paraeducators, and involving teachers in annual performance reviews of paraeducators.
- Assisting members of the instructional team to resolve interpersonal or other problems that may occur in classrooms.
- Providing teachers and paraeducators with information about career development opportunities and support services available through the district or institutions of higher education.

Responsibilities of the teacher in the development and implementation of paraeducator programs in the schools can be broadly defined to include:

- Contributing to the development of the job description for paraeducators.
- Participating in the selection and interview of paraeducator applicants.
- Providing orientation and on-the-job training.
- Providing ongoing advocacy for the paraeducator's role in the school.
- Supervising and evaluating the activities of paraeducators.

### **Clarifying Paraeducators' and Supervising Teachers' Roles**

To the casual observer, a teacher and a paraeducator working side by side appear to perform the same or similar tasks. However, the

roles of teachers and paraeducators differ significantly. A clear delineation of these roles is important to ensure adherence to ethical and legal requirements and to guide supervision and evaluation.

Teachers supervising paraeducators and other support personnel function as managers to:

- Plan, schedule, and assign duties to paraeducators, based on a knowledge of their work experience, level of training, and demonstrated capacity to perform a task.
- Direct and monitor the daily work of paraeducators.
- Provide feedback about the on-the-job performance of paraeducators.
- Plan and provide structured on-the-job coaching based on the identified training needs of paraeducators.

The teacher also sets an example of professionalism in working with students and staff, establishes criteria for acceptable job performance, identifies the unique needs of individual students, establishes the paraeducator's role in behavior management and discipline, and provides the paraeducator with appropriate lesson plans and strategies for delivering instruction.

Paraeducators work alongside teachers, supporting and extending their work. Paraeducators' duties vary from district to district, school to school, and teacher to teacher. Many paraeducators still are expected to perform clerical tasks, maintain learning centers, and monitor study halls, lunchrooms, and playgrounds. Increasingly, they also are asked to assist teachers in order to increase the availability of individualized instruction by:

- Observing and recording data about student performance and participating in other functional assessment activities.
- Tutoring and reinforcing lessons for groups and individual students in classrooms and community settings.
- Implementing teacher-designed behavior management programs and disciplinary procedures.

No matter what duties are assigned to paraeducators, it is the teacher who has the ultimate responsibility for diagnosing instructional needs, prescribing and implementing teaching strategies, and assessing learning outcomes. It is the role of the paraeducator to carry out tasks under the supervision of the teacher.

The teacher and paraeducator form a differentiated team. Teachers provide leadership and clarify the classroom roles of paraeducators. Paraeducators assist teachers in meeting instructional objectives, managing students, and maintaining the instructional environment. Various factors may influence the specific responsibilities assigned to paraeducators, such as the individual characteristics of teachers, paraeducators, and students within the team, the skill level of the paraeducator, the physical environment of the classroom, and the teacher's style of classroom management.

Several techniques can be used by teachers to establish the role of the paraeducator. Developing a job description and engaging in role clarification activities are two of these techniques.

### **Paraeducator Job Descriptions**

A written job description at both the classroom and district levels helps to promote job satisfaction by eliminating apprehensions about what is expected. For the paraeducator, the job description validates the importance of the position, clarifies responsibilities, serves as a reference for evaluating performance, and identifies prerequisite skills. Following is a sample job description. Actual job descriptions may vary from school to school and class to class.

#### **Sample District-Level Job Description for a Paraeducator**

*Position Title:* General Education Paraeducator

*Position Setting:* Elementary/Secondary Classroom

*Qualifications for the Position:*

Meets district requirements for employment, including criteria established for education and health.

*Purpose:*

To assist the teacher in providing appropriate learning experiences for students.

*Duties and Responsibilities:*

1. Carry out instructional activities with students as planned and directed by the teacher.
2. Assist the teacher in implementing the classroom behavior management program.
3. Provide objective feedback to the teacher on student progress and behavior.
4. Assist in the preparation of and care of instructional materials and equipment.
5. Perform clerical duties as assigned by the teacher, including taking attendance, duplicating, grading objective work, recording grades, taking inventory, and ordering supplies.
6. Follow district procedures for maintaining a healthy and safe environment for students.
7. Practice behavior consistent with legal and ethical standards of the district for all employees.

*Orientation and Training Requirements:*

Attend 20 hours of inservice training during the school year, including a three-day orientation session at the beginning of the school year. Work with the teacher for on-the-job training. Topics to be covered include: orientation to the position and the school, emergency procedures, tutoring techniques, behavior management, and other topics pertinent to the position.

*Supervision Guidelines:*

The teacher will supervise the daily work of the paraeducator, providing a schedule, daily plans, and weekly planning conferences. The paraeducator will be responsible to the teacher in instructional and support role matters. The para-

educator will be responsible to the building principal in district policy matters.

***Evaluation Guidelines:***

1. The paraeducator will be evaluated by the teacher at least once per quarter.
2. The teacher and administrator will evaluate the paraeducator once per year.

**Role-Clarification Activities**

Often it is difficult for teachers to find the time to discuss expected roles with the paraeducator. Structured role-clarification activities provide teachers and paraeducators opportunities to acknowledge their own perceptions of their roles and to discuss different expectations. Open discussion helps create a positive environment for both the teacher and the paraeducator.

Communication regarding the relationships between the roles of the teacher and the paraeducator contribute to the development of an effective instructional team. One activity that will help in this clarification is for the teacher and the paraeducator independently to review various activities and to consider whether they are the teacher's or paraeducator's responsibility. Afterward, they can compare and discuss their perceptions. This discussion offers the opportunity to resolve potential conflicts and to reinforce appropriate roles. Some of the activities that should be considered by the teacher and paraeducator are:

1. Evaluating individual lesson plans.
2. Planning a group lesson.
3. Cleaning up after an art lesson.
4. Getting students ready for an activity.
5. Duplicating materials.
6. Supervising playground and recreational activities.
7. Asking parents about a student's behavior at home.

8. Informing parents of meetings.
9. Seeing that students stay at the lunch table.
10. Charting students' performance.
11. Correcting papers.
12. Constructing instructional materials.
13. Conducting an individual lesson.
14. Assessing the value of instructional materials.
15. Conducting group lessons.
16. Keeping daily attendance.
17. Ordering instructional materials.
18. Selecting field trip sites.
19. Planning behavior management strategies.
20. Handling a conflict with another classroom teacher.

## Daily Supervision of the Paraeducator

**F**or teachers and paraeducators to work as a team, they need to communicate clearly and regularly. One way to accomplish these goals is to structure conferences and shared planning times.

Regular conferences between the supervising teacher and the paraeducator are essential to provide time for scheduling, lesson planning, evaluating the effectiveness of past activities, and solving problems. These conferences should be held outside of class time, since trying to provide directions to the paraeducator when students are present can be disruptive. Good conferences have several key characteristics:

- The purpose and content of the conference should be determined and communicated in advance.
- The discussion should be focused, positive, oriented to problem solving, and limited to the announced topics.
- The teacher and paraeducator both should take active roles in the conference.
- The conference should be held at a site that allows access to instructional materials and records.

While the topics covered in each conference will vary, these general topics can be handled well in a weekly conference format: student needs, evaluation of student progress, lesson planning, instructional strategies, classroom management, reinforcement techniques, plan-



ning on-the-job training, evaluation of paraeducator's performance, schedules, and new materials and equipment.

Two activities tend to figure prominently in the role of most paraeducators: organizing instruction and following lesson plans.

### **Organizing Individualized Instruction**

Tutoring individual students often is more effective than group instruction — whether conducted by the teacher or a trained paraeducator. Individual tutoring allows instruction to be tailored to the pupil's skill level, and the intensive focus provides continuous feedback on performance. Using a paraeducator to tutor students can become an integral component of individualizing instruction. Regular supervision and monitoring are important to ensure that the appropriate behaviors are maintained by both the tutor and the student. For the classroom teacher to use the paraeducator as a tutor requires the teacher to:

- Assess the student's skill level.
- Prescribe appropriate instructional materials and place them in the hands of the tutor.
- Detail specific teaching strategies for the tutor to follow.
- Explain how the lesson is to be delivered — when, where, and for how long.
- Show the tutor how to collect information about student progress.
- Monitor and revise the individualized lesson as needed.

Teachers who use paraeducators to deliver instruction have an obligation to prepare the paraeducator adequately for the task and to supervise the paraeducator's activities. The lesson plan that the teacher provides to the paraeducator should include sufficient information so that the paraeducator can conduct the tutorial without making decisions that require professional judgment.

## Lesson Plans

A well-written lesson plan is the first step in clarifying what the teacher expects the paraeducator to do in an instructional situation. It generally contains five components: objectives, activities, materials, reinforcement, and evaluation. These elements enable the paraeducator to carry out instruction as it was intended by the teacher. As teacher and paraeducator become more familiar with one another, written lesson plans may become less formal. However, initially the plans should be carefully detailed in writing and then discussed in a planning conference.

As the paraeducator delivers instruction, the teacher needs to observe the lesson. At first, supervised practice will be essential to effective paraeducator training. Later, the teacher will be able to allow the paraeducator to work more independently. Following are indicators which teachers should look for during supervised practice. Does the paraeducator:

- Provide clear instructions to students?
- Clearly state expectations for students?
- Follow appropriate sequences of instruction?
- Provide opportunities for student response and active participation?
- Use timely, consistent reinforcement?
- Show enthusiasm?
- Use instructional materials appropriately?
- Collect information about student performance?
- Keep clear records?

Following supervised practice, the teacher and paraeducator should discuss the effectiveness of the lesson and identify areas for improvement. Feedback to the paraeducator should be given in a constructive, non-threatening manner.

## Self-Evaluation

The teacher may ask the paraeducator to complete a self-evaluation of the instructional session. This process requires the paraeducator to reconstruct the lesson and examine what occurred. The supervising teacher can review the completed self-evaluation with the paraeducator and use the results for further support and planning. One value of this procedure is that it allows paraeducators to participate in the evaluation process and to establish their personal goals for improving their skills. The form also provides important information on the progress of the student.

Questions the paraeducator should consider in the self-evaluation include:

1. Did I prepare well for the lesson?
2. Did I introduce the lesson so that the student understood the concept that the lesson attempted to teach?
3. Was I enthusiastic enough to get the student interested in performing the task?
4. Did I explain what the student was to do in the practice activity so that he or she understood it?
5. Did I have all the materials I needed to teach the lesson?
6. Did I use the appropriate reinforcement techniques?
7. Did I encourage the student when he or she was having difficulty?
8. Was the lesson successful in reaching the behavioral objective for the unit?

The paraeducator also should evaluate how the student did during the instructional session. Questions the paraeducator should consider include:

1. Was the student able to perform the task required in the lesson?
2. Did the student need other experiences before attempting the current lesson plan?

3. Was the student willing to try (motivated) to do the exercise?
4. Did the student appear interested in the lesson?

### **Classroom Schedules**

Adequate supervision of the paraeducator and smooth functioning of the classroom is facilitated by using a written schedule of activities to be performed by both the teacher and the paraeducator. Schedules provide security and guidance for the paraeducator, and they encourage effective time management. Inexperienced paraeducators may not know how long to allow for the various components of the instructional plan. Teachers can use schedules to guide paraeducators until the lessons can be delivered independently.

The amount of detail on such schedules can vary from a simple listing of student names and skills to be taught to a detailed outline of activities to be conducted. Classroom teachers must remain especially flexible in drawing up such schedules, since both routine and unplanned activities frequently encroach on teaching time. Daily and weekly schedules should be discussed in the weekly planning conferences.

## **Developing Paraeducator Skills**

**T**raining is a crucial element in the effective use of paraeducators, as they are required to possess both skills and discretion. Training for paraeducators helps protect students, improves instructional delivery, encourages compliance with policies and regulations, and maximizes the benefits to the school employing paraeducators. The school and the supervising teacher share responsibility for training paraeducators and assigning only duties for which paraeducators have had adequate preparation.

There are two methods of providing training for paraeducators, group inservice and on-the-job training. Whichever method is used, both teachers and paraeducators should be involved in designing the training. This results in more relevant topics and instruction and also contributes to improved job satisfaction, morale, and a personal desire to improve skills.

When designing training for paraeducators, administrators and teachers first must identify the expected training outcomes.

### **Paraeducator Training Outcomes**

The jobs that paraeducators fill in a school system are extremely diverse. For example, one paraeducator may assist in a kindergarten classroom, while another is assigned to work with a student who has severe non-compliance behavior and is assigned to a general educa-

tion classroom. Thus, training should be designed to match the job. But it also should broadly cover a set of general competencies.

Despite the diversity in their jobs, there are some competencies that are needed by all paraeducators. School districts should determine a core set of general competencies to be achieved by all paraeducators. These general competencies include the ability to:

1. Delineate the school policies affecting their roles.
2. Define the legal and ethical issues involved in their roles in the classroom.
3. Understand the role expectations of the position in relationship to the teacher, administrators, students, and parents.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of discipline and classroom management strategies.
5. Demonstrate skills in delivering instruction.
6. Demonstrate skills in observing, documenting, and reporting student behavior.
7. Use and maintain instructional training materials.
8. Use audiovisual, duplicating, and other equipment in the education of handicapped students.
9. Demonstrate skills in first aid and safety procedures.

While it is important for paraeducators to receive ongoing training, schools should not wait until after the paraeducator is on the job to begin their training. Instead, training should begin with the paraeducator's initial orientation to the school.

## **Orientation**

A newly hired paraeducator needs a general orientation to the position and the school. The orientation should cover such topics as school policies, program goals, emergency procedures, and ethical standards. Before working directly with students, paraeducators also will need additional orientation to the specific classroom in which they will be working.

A mutual exchange of information between the teacher and the paraeducator during orientation is important to eliminate misunderstandings. The teacher should explain his or her educational philosophy and teaching style, the structure of the program, behavior management strategies, and ways to motivate students. Background information about the paraeducator that might help the teacher includes the paraeducator's educational level, previous work experiences, experiences with children, and attitudes toward students with disabilities.

As part of the orientation, the new paraeducator will need time to observe and get acquainted with students and staff before assuming an instructional role in the classroom. Observation provides insight into the way the teacher works with students, both in the delivery of instruction and the management of behavior. New duties should be introduced gradually, beginning with clerical and other general support tasks. As the paraeducator becomes acquainted with the students and with the activities that take place in the classroom, the teacher can provide more training.

Paraeducators need to be informed of the extent of their authority with students. In addition, they should know what to do in cases where they are uncomfortable or unprepared to respond to students' behaviors. In the process of inducting paraeducators into the classroom, it is important to establish their authority with students. This may be accomplished by informing the students that the paraeducator will be carrying out the teacher's directives and has the full support of the teacher. Other orientation and induction activities include familiarizing paraeducators with the school's physical plant, introducing them to other staff and administrators, and acquainting them with school policies.

The building principal and teachers need to demonstrate that paraeducators are important members of the educational team. In some schools a mentor — usually an experienced paraeducator — is assigned to assist new paraeducators in becoming acquainted with the school. At the conclusion of the orientation, paraeducators should feel comfortable knowing where to go for answers to their questions.

## **Inservice Training**

Many of the general competencies previously described will be discussed briefly during the orientation. However, they should be treated in depth during inservice training.

Local inservice training is an efficient, economical way to provide information to a large number of paraeducators. The use of local professionals has a dual advantage. First, paraeducators are given the opportunity to meet and hear members of the local staff; and second, local administrators and teachers usually understand most clearly the programs and needs of their own schools and the district.

Inservice topics should include developmental characteristics of children, learning principles and instructional strategies, and classroom and behavior management strategies. General issues, such as school policies, legal and ethical issues, and confidentiality, also can be addressed in this format. Inservice topics should be chosen to meet the identified needs of the paraeducators in the district. Although participation in inservice programs designed for teachers can be helpful for paraeducators, it is not sufficient to meet their needs.

One of the most frequently heard comments from paraeducators who participate in inservice activities is, "I wish my teacher could have heard this information." Particular efforts should be made to include supervising classroom teachers in the planning and delivery of the paraeducators' inservice training, and they should follow up on the use of this new information in the classroom setting.

Scheduling inservice training is another concern. Paraeducators' schedules often are closely related to students' schedules. It may be difficult to find time when paraeducators can attend formal inservice training programs without affecting services to teachers and students. Schools should recognize that the training of paraeducators is essential to their effectiveness and create time for inservice training.

Inservice training is an essential part of developing paraeducators' skills. However, inservice training offers only a limited opportunity for actual skill development. Paraeducators need time to apply new



knowledge and practice skills. Therefore, on-the-job training should be provided in addition to formal inservice.

### **On-the-Job Training**

The foundation for improving the management and performance of paraeducators begins in the classroom. Structured, on-the-job coaching supports a team approach to meeting the needs of students. It gives teachers opportunities to prepare paraeducators to take on new tasks and to give them feedback about ways in which they can improve their performance. And it allows paraeducators, with the guidance of the teacher, to practice and master skills learned during orientation and inservice training.

On-the-job training is particularly effective in teaching certain types of skills, such as tutoring and behavior management, provided that the training is systematically planned and carried out. On-the-job training also may focus on the individual needs of the paraeducator and the teacher-paraeducator team.

To be successful, on-the-job training must include a pre-assessment of the paraeducators' training needs, established training objectives, an activities plan, resources for learning, and a method of evaluating the improvement in knowledge and skills. A systematic approach to on-the-job training offers additional advantages if the paraeducator is involved in the planning process and accepts responsibility for acquiring the new skills outlined in the plan.

Since much of the paraeducator's time is spent directly with students on academic tasks, on-the-job training is especially important for developing the paraeducator's instructional skills. The teacher should model instructional techniques, provide opportunities for hands-on experience with materials, and supervise practice with the materials prior to having the paraeducator work independently with students. The teacher also will want to emphasize skills in individualized tutoring and observing and recording student behavior.

## **Implementing Training Programs**

Paraeducator training programs should be long-range, comprehensive, and systematic. Each teacher-paraeducator team should develop an annual training plan, targeting the new skills to be acquired. The impact of training will be diminished if it is planned around the availability of certain speakers or based on the current "hot topic," rather than on progressive development of identified knowledge and skills.

To develop effective training programs, each school district should establish a committee of administrators, teachers, and paraeducators for the purpose of identifying competencies and instructional needs for paraeducators. This will require a general needs assessment in addition to examining the requirements in the written job description and school policies and programs.

Effective training for paraeducators should provide a continuum of experiences: 1) formal orientation that sets the foundation for paraeducational work, 2) inservice sessions that supplement and enhance knowledge and skill development, 3) structured on-the-job coaching in classrooms or other learning environments, and 4) opportunities for paraeducators to earn academic credit or enter professional preparation programs.

Ideally, training should be provided at the district, building, and classroom levels. School personnel should develop a wide variety of resources to improve paraeducators' skills. Types of training resources include paraeducator mentoring programs, sponsored paraeducator associations or groups, support for tuition and conference attendance for paraeducators, and purchase of media and resource materials for use in self-training. Schools also may develop collaborative efforts with two-year and four-year colleges, professional organizations, and unions to provide additional training for paraeducators.

## **Evaluating Paraeducator Programs**

**T**he classroom teacher frequently is asked to participate actively in evaluating the paraeducator and to provide information that will assist in the evaluation. But the teacher's interest in evaluation should extend beyond just the district's formal personnel evaluation. The teacher should be concerned with finding ways to help the paraeducator be more effective. Evaluation of the paraeducator's ability to carry out classroom functions is one means of highlighting the need for additional assistance or training, as well as recognizing mastered skills.

Teachers also should evaluate how effectively they have included paraeducators in the instructional setting. The teacher should try to determine if assignments have been effective in meeting students needs, if resources have been used wisely, if training has been appropriate for tasks assigned, and if communication and supervision have been effective in directing the paraeducator.

### **Evaluating Paraeducator Performance**

The evaluation of paraeducator performance can be informal or formal. Informal evaluation by the supervising teacher occurs on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. Formal evaluation involves the observations and ratings by administrators and other personnel in addition to the supervising teacher.

Informal evaluation occurs on a daily basis. Observations made each day can be used to identify areas of strength and weakness. These observations can be explored in greater depth during the weekly conference between the teacher and paraeducator.

A formal evaluation requires more planning and often involves the use of standardized forms. Components of a formal evaluation process include: 1) pre-observation activities, including defining concerns, establishing criteria for acceptable performance, and developing evaluative instruments; 2) gathering data through formal observations; 3) analyzing results and determining recommended changes; and 4) providing feedback in a conference.

The formal evaluation process frequently is shared by teachers and administrators. They draw on the written job description to define areas of concern and to establish performance criteria. Items on observation forms and rating scales are designed to match the responsibilities outlined in the job description.

Information from the evaluation should be shared with the paraeducator in a conference. Topics include strengths and weaknesses, areas for improvement, strategies for altering behavior, inservice plans, and changes in assigned duties.

In addition to rating the performance of the paraeducator, an important outcome of the evaluation process is determining how effectively the services of the paraeducator are being used. We recommend an annual review of program effectiveness.

### **Evaluating Teacher Supervision of Paraeducators**

The following checklist is designed to assist administrators in evaluating teachers' supervision of paraeducators. The components are arranged to answer four questions: 1) Does the teacher provide the necessary structure for supervision? 2) Has the teacher provided appropriate support for the paraeducator? 3) How does the presence of the paraeducator affect the teacher? and 4) How does the presence of the paraeducator affect the students?

## **Paraeducator Supervision Checklist for Teachers**

### **Does the teacher provide the necessary structure for supervision?**

- ☐ Is there a schedule of classroom activities?
- ☐ Does the teacher maintain a time and activity log for paraeducators?
- ☐ Does the teacher observe and provide feedback on performance?
- ☐ Is there a log of planning meetings including topics and students discussed?
- ☐ Does the teacher maintain records of student performance?
- ☐ Does the teacher use written lesson plans to direct instruction?
- ☐ Are alternative instructional strategies in place?
- ☐ Is there an on-the-job training plan?
- ☐ Does the teacher document the paraeducator's mastery of skills?
- ☐ Is there a clearly stated evaluation plan with identified criteria?

### **Has the teacher provided appropriate support for the paraeducator?**

- ☐ Are expectations clear?
- ☐ Is feedback provided on performance?
- ☐ Is the teacher available when needed?
- ☐ Is training provided?
- ☐ Is training appropriate?
- ☐ Is training documented?
- ☐ Are students rotated between the teacher and the paraeducator?
- ☐ Does the teacher provide flexibility and variety in assignments?

- \_\_\_ Are regularly scheduled meetings held?
- \_\_\_ Does the teacher show respect for the paraeducator?
- \_\_\_ Does the teacher provide adequate information?
- \_\_\_ Does the tone of the classroom promote participation of the paraeducator?
- \_\_\_ Does the teacher provide an appropriate role model for the paraeducator?
- \_\_\_ Does the teacher provide appropriate recognition to the paraeducator?

**How does the presence of the paraeducator affect the teacher?**

- \_\_\_ Is the teacher's time used more effectively?
- \_\_\_ Are consulting activities promoted?
- \_\_\_ Does the teacher have increased time for planning?
- \_\_\_ Does the teacher have more time for assessment and diagnosis of student needs?
- \_\_\_ Is program evaluation and development promoted?
- \_\_\_ Does the teacher observe the paraeducator and students regularly?
- \_\_\_ Are teacher relationships with students improved?

**How does the presence of the paraeducator affect the students?**

- \_\_\_ Are the students satisfied with instruction provided?
- \_\_\_ Are student objectives being achieved?
- \_\_\_ Are student behaviors appropriate for learning?
- \_\_\_ Is effective student learning time increased?
- \_\_\_ Do students receive more individual attention?

## Conclusion

In far too many cases, teachers are not prepared to direct paraeducators, to evaluate their performance, to provide feedback and training, or to assess the potential for even greater use of paraeducators in order to free teachers to provide increased instructional services. Teachers often are uncomfortable because they are unsure of what roles can be assigned to paraeducators. Often they are uncomfortable with directing and delegating responsibilities to an adult, or they lack the time and resources for providing supportive training.

The skills needed to use paraeducators effectively differ from those required to provide direct instruction to students. Paraeducators will be used more effectively when teachers acquire the needed skills.

Teachers should take an active role in the development of policies for using paraeducators in the school system. Teachers should be able to identify the effects on student performance of implementing a paraeducator program. They should be aware of the legal and ethical constraints on the use of paraeducators in school programs. And they must take the major responsibility for the on-the-job training of paraeducators.

The effective use of paraeducators relies on a collegial approach, in which administrators, teachers, and paraeducators work together to gain the maximum benefit for students.

## Suggested Readings

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- Pickett, A.L.; Faison, K.; Formanek, J.; and Semrau, B. *A Core Curriculum and Training Program to Prepare Paraeducators to Work in: 1) Early Childhood Education, 2) Inclusive Classrooms Serving Students With Special Needs, and 3) Transitional and Vocational Programs for Youth with Disabilities*. 3 vols. New York: National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, Center for Advanced Study in Education, Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York, 1993.
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